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(71) Applicant: Fisher & Paykel Healthcare Limited
 East Tamaki, Auckland (NZ)

(72) Inventors:
 • Deshita, Afrawana Editsurya
 Pakuranga, Auckland (NZ)
 • Poh Ming Laurent, Christopher
 Bucklands Beach, Auckland (NZ)

(74) Representative:
 Heaton, Lloyd Douglas Charles et al
 Forrester & Boehmert,
 Pottenkofersstrasse 20-22
 80336 München (DE)

SUMMARY OF THE PRIOR ART

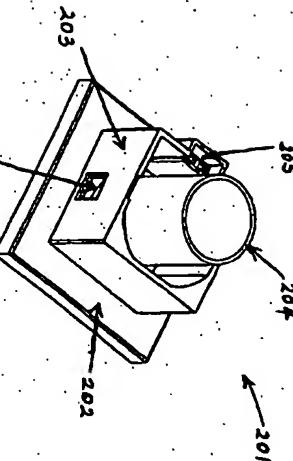
[0002] In order to supply gases to a patient or a person needing such gases, it may sometimes be necessary to first humidify those gases, for example using a respiratory humidifier/ventilator system. In such a case where the gases have been humidified, and therefore laden with water, it is likely that during transport through a conduit to the patient, condensation of that water vapour will occur. In order to overcome this disadvantage it is known to associate a heater wire with respiratory humidifier breathing conduits to avoid condensation. Examples of such a heated breathing conduit are disclosed in US 5,537,996 (McPhee) and US 5,392,770 (Clawson et al.). A connector that simply fits into the humidifier chamber outlet is currently known that provides for connection between a humidifier and a breathing conduit. To provide Figure 1 illustrates how current is supplied to the heater wire within the breathing conduit and the connection between the conduit and humidifier. The humidifier 102 has a humidification chamber 103 having an inlet 104 that is connected to the outlet of a device that supplies gases to the humidifier. The humidification chamber 103 also has an outlet 105. A connector 106 causes the connection between the breathing conduit 101 and the outlet 105. The connector 106 is located at one end of the conduit 101. The end of the connector 106 fits snugly into or about the outlet 105. The wire within the breathing conduit 108 is heated by way of the external connector 109 that is connected via known electrical wiring to the humidifier base 110.

[0003] Existing connectors of this type have the disadvantage that there are external wires that may cause

problems for the user and will be in the way when in use.

Furthermore, the connection between the breathing conduit and the humidifier outlet does not provide an op-

timal connection.



SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] It is an object of the present invention to provide a connector between a gases supply means and a heated breathing conduit that goes some way towards overcoming the above-mentioned disadvantages.

[0005] In a first aspect the present invention consists

in a connector to couple a gases supply means and a

(54) **Connector for the pneumatical and electrical coupling between a gases supply means and a gas conduit**

(57) The present invention relates to the connections between respiratory humidifiers and/or other such devices and heated breathing conduits used to couple a patient to the humidifier. In particular, the invention is a connector to couple a gases supply means and a conduit, such that the connector causes there to be an electrical and pneumatic, that is, sealed connection between a conduit including an electrical wire extending within,

throughout or about it and a gases supply device, such as a humidifier, blower or the like. The connector may be of a single port type or a dual port type. The dual port type connector is suitable for ventilator apparatus that have a dry line (dry breathing conduit) extending from a ventilator or blower that carries dry gas to a humidifier and an inspiratory limb that extends from the humidifier to the patient and carries humidified gases to the patient.

[0006] To those skilled in the art to which the invention relates, many changes in construction and widely differing embodiments and applications of the invention will suggest themselves without departing from the scope of the invention as defined in the appended claims. The disclosures and the descriptions herein are purely illustrative and are not intended to be in any sense limiting.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] One preferred form of the present invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a connector used in prior art devices to provide the connection between a breathing conduit and humidifier.
 Figure 2 is a schematic diagram of a respiratory humidification system that may incorporate the description of conduit overheating system of the present invention.
 Figure 3 is an illustration of a respiratory humidifier system that utilises the connector of the present invention.

Figure 4 is an illustration of the humidifier base of the respiratory humidifier system of Figure 2, and Figure 5 is a perspective view of apparatus that is used in conjunction with the connector of the present invention, wherein the gases supply means and humidifier are contained within an enclosure.

Figure 6 is front view of the apparatus of Figure 5, Figure 7 is a side view of the heated gas delivery system as connected to the connector of the present invention.

a male portion of a generally tubular shape connected to one of said gases supply means and said conduit, said male portion having a locking connector receiving means and an electrical connector receiving means, a female portion of a generally tubular shape connected to one of said gases supply means and said conduit, said female portion having a locking connector means and an electrical connector means,

wherein coupling of said male and female portions causes said locking connector means to engage with said locking connector receiving means and lock said male and female portions together, and said coupling simultaneously causing said electrical connector means to engage with said electrical connector receiving means, making a pneumatic seal and electrical connection between said male and female portions and consequently between said gases supply means and said conduit.

[0008] To those skilled in the art to which the invention relates, many changes in construction and widely differing embodiments and applications of the invention will suggest themselves without departing from the scope of the invention as defined in the appended claims. The disclosures and the descriptions herein are purely illustrative and are not intended to be in any sense limiting.

[0009] One preferred form of the present invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a connector used in prior art devices to provide the connection between a breathing conduit and humidifier.

Figure 2 is a schematic diagram of a respiratory humidification system that may incorporate the description of conduit overheating system of the present invention.

Figure 3 is an illustration of a respiratory humidifier system that utilises the connector of the present invention.

Figure 4 is an illustration of the humidifier base of the respiratory humidifier system of Figure 2, and Figure 5 is a perspective view of apparatus that is used in conjunction with the connector of the present invention, wherein the gases supply means and humidifier are contained within an enclosure.

Figure 6 is front view of the apparatus of Figure 5, Figure 7 is a side view of the heated gas delivery system as connected to the connector of the present invention.

Figure 8 is a perspective view of the male portion of a first form connector of the present invention, where the connector has a single port, Figure 9 is a plan view of the male portion of the connector of Figure 8, Figure 10 is a side cross-sectional view of the male portion of the connector of Figure 7, Figure 11 is a perspective view of the female portion of the first form of the connector of the present invention, Figure 12 is a plan view of the female portion of the connector as shown in Figure 9, Figure 13 is a cross-sectional view of the female portion of the connector shown through A-A in Figure 10, Figure 14 is a perspective view of the male portion of a second form of the connector of the present invention, where the connector has a dual port, Figure 15 is a partial cross-section side view of the male portion of the second form of the connector as shown in Figure 12, Figure 16 is a perspective view of the female portion of the second form of the connector of the present invention, Figure 17 is a cross-section of the female portion as shown in Figure 15, Figure 18 is a perspective view of the male as moulded to one end of a conduit according to a portion as third form of the present invention, Figure 19 is a perspective view of the male portion of Figure 18 when not moulded to the conduit, Figure 20 is a perspective view of the female portion of the connector according to a third form of the present invention, Figure 21 is a underneath view of the male portion of the connector of the third form of the present invention, Figure 22 is a cross-sectional side view of the male portion of Figure 18, Figure 23 is an alternative side cross-sectional view of the male portion of Figure 19, Figure 24 is a underneath view of the female portion of Figure 20, Figure 25 is a side view of the female portion of Figure 20, Figure 26 is a plan view of the female portion of Figure 20, and Figure 27 is an illustration of a humidifier or CPAP device where the chamber for this device is of the cartridge type and the connector to the breathing tube is two part, the first pneumatic part located on the chamber and the second electrical part is located on the base, and

Figure 27 is an illustration of a device of Figure 27 when connected to the breathing tube when the breathing tube and connector extends over and about the two part connector of Figure 27, Figure 28 is a first perspective view of a sliding cover of a connector according to fourth form of the present invention, Figure 29 is a second perspective view of the sliding cover of Figure 28, Figure 31 is a first perspective view of the female portion according to the fourth form of the connector of the present invention, Figure 32 is a second perspective view of the female portion of Figure 31, Figure 33 is a perspective view of the male portion according to the fourth form of the connector of the present invention, Figure 34 is a perspective view of the breathing conduit attached to the female portion of the fourth form of the connector of the present invention, where the sliding cover is only partially covering the female portion, Figure 35 is a cross-sectional view of the breathing conduit, female portion and sliding cover where the cover is in a position that enables locking of the female portion to the male portion, and Figure 36 is a perspective view of the breathing conduit, female portion and sliding cover as shown in Figure 25.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0008] With reference to the accompanying drawings and in particular to Figure 2, an example of humidification apparatus and respiration humidification system incorporating preferred embodiments of the connector of the present invention is illustrated. In the description below, reference has been made to the connection of a breathing conduit to a humidifier. It must be appreciated that the connector of the present invention may be used to connect a breathing conduit to other medical devices, such as a positive pressure ventilation devices, continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) devices, insufflation devices, integrated insufflation and humidification devices, integrated CPAP and humidifier devices, or any other such breathing assistance device that can be used in either home-care or hospital applications. The use of the word humidifier alone must not be seen as restrictive to the application or use of the connector of the present invention.

[0009] Included in the example respiratory humidification system as shown in Figure 2, is a gases supply means 1, such as a ventilator or blower, having an outlet 2 that supplies gases (for example oxygen, anaesthetic gases or air) to the inlet 3 of a humidification chamber 4 may, for example, comprise a plastics formed chamber having a metal base 7 sealed thereto. Humidification chamber 4 is adapted to hold a volume of water 8, which is heated by a heater plate means 9 under the control of controller or control means 11 of a humidification device or humidifier 10.

[0010] As the water within chamber 4 is heated it will slowly evaporate, mixing water vapour with the gases flowing through the humidification chamber from ventilator 1. Accordingly, humidified gases leave the humidification chamber 4 via outlet 12 and are passed to a patient or other person in need of such gases 13 through a gases transportation pathway or inspiratory conduit 14. The conduit 14 is connected to the outlet of the humidifier chamber by way of a connector that will be described below. In order to reduce condensation within the inspiratory conduit 14 and to raise the temperature of the gases provided to the patient 13 a heating wire means 15 is provided which is energised under the control of control means 11.

[0011] Referring to Figures 3 and 4, which show the humidifier 10 of Figure 2 in more detail, the humidifier 20 has a humidifying chamber 21 having edges, which engage with collar 22 on the humidifier 20. The gases to be humidified may be a mixture of air, oxygen and anaesthetic for example, which are supplied to the chamber through gas inlet 23. This might be connected to a ventilator, source of pressurised oxygen, flow generator, or air compressor. A gases outlet 24 is also provided and the gases outlet 24 is connected to the conduit 25, which conveys humidified gases to the patient at the end 26 of the conduit. The end 26 of the conduit may have a cannula connected to the patient's nose, nasal mask or facemask connected to the user's face, so as to supply humidified gases to the user. The humidifier 20 has a temperature transducer 28 that is in electrical connection with the electronic control circuitry in body 29 of the apparatus so that the control means monitors the temperature of the heating plate. A heating element 30 is provided within the conduit 25 to help prevent condensation of the humidified gases within the conduit. Such condensation is due to the temperature of the walls of the conduit being close to the ambient temperature, (being the temperature of the surrounding atmosphere) which is usually lower than the temperature of the humidified gases within the conduit. The heater element effectively replaces the energy lost from the gases through conduction and convection during transit through the conduit. Thus the conduit heater element ensures the gases delivered are at an optimal temperature and humidity.

[0012]

[0013] The end of the conduit 25 has a connector 31 suitable for coupling the conduit to the humidifier. The connector comprises a male portion attached to the humidifier and a female portion attached to the breathing conduit, which when coupled provides both a pneumatic conduit and electrical coupling between the humidifier chamber and breathing circuit. The effect of the electrical connection in this manner, is that the electrical wire running the length of the conduit is controllable from the humidifier without there being additional external wiring from the humidifier to the conduit that could be accidentally removed by a patient or user. The connector is described in more detail below.

[0014] In an alternative application, the connector of the present invention may be used with a humidifier that has been integrated with a gases supply means such as a shown in Figure 5. The gases supply means such as a ventilator, ventilator or insufflator and humidifier are housed within an enclosure 33. The enclosure 33 has a recess 34 that provides an area for a humidifying chamber 35 to be located in. The chamber 35 is situated upon a heater plate 36, which is connected to electronics that heat the plate 36, and enables humidification of the gas within the chamber when the chamber has water placed within it.

[0015] Referring now to Figure 6, the chamber 35 has an entry port 40 that is connected to the outlet of the gases means housed within the enclosure 33. An exit port 41 that has been connected to the breathing conduit (see Figure 7) that carries the gas to the patient. External to the enclosure 33 is the breathing conduit, which is shown in Figure 7. This takes warm, humid gas from the enclosure and delivers it to the patient, maintaining temperature and humidity of the gas. The conduit 42 comprises a tube 43, connector 44, spiral wire 45 and end 46, for use to connect the breathing conduit to the patient.

[0016] The enclosure end of the tube 43 has a connector 44 suitable for connecting to the gas outlet of the humidifier and an electrical socket suitable for connecting to the electrical outlet of the humidifier (not shown) within the enclosure 33. The connector 44 and electrical socket are described in more detail below. Within the tube 43 is a spiral wound heater wire 45, such as that described in US Patent No.5640051 or US Patent No. 6078730 (Fisher & Paykel Limited) running inside part or all of the length of the tube 43. The terminations of this heater wire are connected to the electrical socket of the connector 44.

[0017] The connector end of the tube 43 has a connector 44 suitable for connecting to the gas outlet of the humidifier and an electrical socket suitable for connecting to the electrical outlet of the humidifier (not shown) within the enclosure 33. The connector 44 and electrical socket are described in more detail below. Within the tube 43 is a spiral wound heater wire 45, such as that described in US Patent No.5640051 or US Patent No. 6078730 (Fisher & Paykel Limited) running inside part or all of the length of the tube 43. The terminations of this heater wire are connected to the electrical socket of the connector 44.

Single Port Electrical/Pneumatic Connector

[0018] The connector of the present invention in first form is a single port connector, which provides the connection between a humidifying apparatus and a breathing circuit when the male and female portions are coupled together. A pneumatic and an electrical coupling is achieved between the breathing circuit and humidifier described above. The connector comprises a male portion attached to a humidifier chamber and a female portion attached to the heated breathing circuit so that in use when the male and female portions are coupled together, a pneumatic and an electrical coupling is achieved between the breathing circuit and humidifier or other such device, such as a positive pressure ventilation device or blower.

[0019] The male portion of the first form of a connector

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tached, in an appropriate manner, to the chamber of the

tween the tubular port 214 and the sleeve 211. Simultaneously, the proximities 213, 215 fit into the apertures

body section 405.

0351 Located below the groove 425 is a rim 427, which traverses the male portion 400 from behind outward.

humidifying apparatus, in some forms of this connector the base 202 will be the body of the chamber itself, but in other forms the base may be clipped, welded, moulded or otherwise appropriately attached to the chamber or base of the humidifier. The male portion 11-

[0075] The protrusions 213, 215 and spoutures 205, 209 also have the effect of providing a quick release mechanism that allows user-friendly and efficient release of the circuit from the humidifier. When a user wishes to remove the male portion from the female por-

plastics material used for moulding (such as a thermoplastic elastomer) to flow into the insert, forming a gas-
ket. After moulding the plastic material from the mould-
ing forms an outer surface covering 406 of thermoplastic
elastomer over the conduit and insert.

[0032] Additionally, at least one pivoting member 408
is integrally formed in the polyacetalic body section
405 of the insert 401. The pivoting member is a portion
of the standard tubular shape of the body section that is
15 connected via standard wiring 428 to the power supply
usually retained within the humidifier control mechan-
isms.

[0033] In use, once the male portion 401 is attached
to the humidifier and the female portion 401 moulded to
the conduit 403, a connection is formed between the
conduit 403 and the humidifier by coupling the male and

may be inserted into the electrical connector on the male portion after the portion has been moulded. Alternatively, a separate sub assembly with the conductors could be formed and threaded onto the conduit, and then over-moulded.

tached to the breathing conduit, and finally through into the breathing conduit to the patient. [0023] The female portion of the connector will now be described with reference to Figures 11 to 13. The female portion 210 is a generally tubular member that is

wire itself could be used to carry electrical signals from measuring sensors. When additional leads are supplied additional pins and/or contacts are supplied within the electrical part of the connector.

contact surfaces located within it (not shown) metal after connected to the heater wire (as already shown) remains connected to the heater wire (as already shown) remaining within or about the breathing conduit. Soldering or fastening the heater wire to the pins or contact surfaces by appropriate fastening means causes connection.

and a threaded body section 405 that is of a reduced diameter compared to the body section 405. The body section 405 has a protrusion 406 that defines an electrical port or recess when the female portion is mated to the conduct 403. The electrical port 406 is of generally rectangular shape and extends from the outer surface of the

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the connection end 423, forming a tapering end on the portion 400. Partway along the portion 400 is a groove 425, spanning the circumferential area of the portion 400. In which the portions 415, 416 on the female portion 400 fit or clip into when the connection end 423 of the male portion 400 is coupled to the female portion. 55

(0046) The sliding collar as depicted in Figures 29 and

30 is of a generally tubular shape where the collar has two sections an upper section 603 and lower section 604. The lower section 604 is oval in cross-section and the upper section 603 (in a reducing diameter fashion) to the tubular upper section 603 that becomes circular in cross-section at its edge 605. Located on the exterior surface of the lower section 604 are depressions 606 that are the shape and size of a human finger pad so that the depressions 606 form a gripping surface for a user's fingers. As shown in Figure 30, on the inferior surface of the lower section 604, on the lower edge 607 at least one but preferably two spaced apart small protrusions 608 are integrally molded in the collar 600. These protrusions 608 slide within complimentary slots in the inferior surface of the collar 600. The collar 600 is slid over the body 622. The other end of the body 622 terminates in an oring 624 that causes the seal between the male portion 602 and the female portion 601 when in use. Where the top of the rim 623 extends out from the side of the body 622 there is a elongate protrusion 625 of the shape and size of the recess 618 formed in the female portion 601 extending out and upward from the surface of the rim 623. Within the protrusion 625 are elongate recesses 626 that receive the pins 621 when the protrusion 625 is inserted within the female portion 601. Located pairwise along the body 622 of the male portion 602 are two horizontal recesses, of which only one is shown in Figure 33. The recesses 627 are shallow and located on the outer surface of the body 622, but do not extend through to the inner surface of

female portion 601 when the collar 600 is inserted into the body 622.

[0045] In use, once the female portion 601 has been inserted into the breathing conduit 615 the sliding collar 600 is slid over the conduit and about the female portion 601. Figure 34 shows the sliding collar only partially covering the female portion 601, whereas in Figures 35 and 36 show the sliding collar 600 covering all of the female portion 601. To lock the sliding collar 600 about the female portion 601 the protrusion (not shown) on the inner surface of the collar 600 is received by the small protrusion 617 on the female portion. To remove the collar from the female portion 601 the user need only grip the collar at the depressions 608 and pull the collar upwards to remove it from the female portion 601. Other means of locking the collar to the female portion are envisaged, such as twisting the collar about the female portion after the collar is slid onto the female portion, or a bayonet lock or frictional locking.

portion of the humidifier.	<p>[0046] When the male portion is connected to the chamber of a humidifier by appropriate means, or if it is integrally moulded from the male portion 602 to the humidifier 600, the wires 627 extend from the male portion 602 to the heater base or other power source connected to the humidifier. These wires 627 terminate within the protrusions 625 at contacts within the recesses 626 so that when the female portion is coupled with the male portion the pins 621 slide into the elongate recesses 628 and meet with the contacts forming an electrical connection between the humidifier and wires on the breathing conduit.</p>	<p>[0047] In use, a pneumatic connection is caused between the male and female portion when the male portion 602 is inserted within the female portion 601 and the pivoting members 610 slide along the body 622 of the male portion 602 and into the horizontal recesses 626. The inside edges of the pivoting members have lips 610 that extend inwardly. When the sliding collar 600 is passed down over the female portion 601 so the pivoting members are pushed inwards and the lips 628 are pushed into the recesses 627 on the body 622 of the male portion 602. An upward pulling force was placed upon the breathing conduit 619 the locking together of the male and female portions prevents the breathing conduit 619 and female portion from being removed from the</p>
35	<p>610 is a simple or aperture 617 that receives a complementary shaped protrusion located on the inner surface of the sliding collar 600 when the collar 600 is slid over and about the female portion 601. Formed within the lower section 610 is a electrical port or recess 618 that houses pins as shown in Figure 35, which will be described in more detail below.</p>	<p>[0042] The female portion 601 is moulded in a polycarbonate or other appropriate plastics material over the tube 619 as shown in Figures 34 to 36. Referring to Figure 35 during or before the moulding of her female portion 601 over the tube 619, the wires that reside within the breathing conduit 620 encircling the conduit 619, are connected to standard wiring and subsequently to electrical pins 621 residing within the recess 618 formed during the moulding process.</p>
45	<p>[0043] Referring to Figure 33 that depicts the male portion 602 of the connector of the present invention. The male portion 602 is formed from a plastics type material by injection moulding but may be formed from other appropriate materials using other appropriate melt-casting processes.</p>	<p>The male portion 602 is formed from a plastics type material by injection moulding but may be formed from other appropriate materials using other appropriate melt-casting processes.</p>
50	<p>[0044] The male portion 602 has a main body 622 and a pivoting portion 623 that is attached to the main body 622 by a pivoting joint 624. The pivoting portion 623 is formed from a plastics type material by injection moulding but may be formed from other appropriate materials using other appropriate melt-casting processes.</p>	<p>[0044] The male portion 602 has a main body 622 and a pivoting portion 623 that is attached to the main body 622 by a pivoting joint 624. The pivoting portion 623 is formed from a plastics type material by injection moulding but may be formed from other appropriate materials using other appropriate melt-casting processes.</p>

The latch may be formed integrally with the female portion, resulting in approximately the same electrical protection as section 309 is located. Similarly, the recess may be integrally formed with the electrical recess 306 of the male portion.

Cartridge Type Humidifier and Connector

[0048] In other forms of the present invention, such as that shown in Figure 27, the electrical connector part 500 of a male connector, similar to that described above, is located on the base 503 of a humidifier 504. The humidifier 504 has a cartridge type chamber 502 that has the pneumatic connector part 501 of the male connector located on it. As shown in Figure 28 when the female portion of the connector 505 (attached to the end of a breathing conduit 506) is connected to the male portions

portion. Alternatively both the latch and recess may be formed in the male and female parts at other appropriate locations. On insertion, a simultaneous electrical connection is made as the rectangular shaped electrical protrusion 309 located on the female portion 305 is inserted into the electrical recess 306 of the male portion 303. The electrical protrusion 309 is connected to wiring within the humidifier and subsequently to the control mechanisms within the humidifier, to provide power to the electrical wiring and to control the heating of the control circuitry. The protrusion 309 is also used to provide a pick-up signal to the control circuitry.

[0049] During use of ventilator apparatus in a hospital, where there is a humidifier and at least one breathing conduit, a connector of another preferred form of the present invention might be utilized. Some ventilator apparatus used in hospitals are provided with a dry line (dry breathing conduit) extending from the ventilator or blower that carries dry gas to the humidifier. A further breathing conduit, an inspiratory limb, extends from the humidifier to the patient and carries humidified gases to the patient as that is described above.

[0050] The female portion 305 may form part of the chamber of the humidifier or may be attached by appropriate means to that of the side port 501 similar to that of the side port 501 of the connector as described above in relation to Figures 8 to 13.

[0053] The male 300 and female 305 portions, an injection moulded. In some cases the female portion 305 may be integrally injection moulded with the humidifier chamber. Each of these portions may be formed by other appropriate methods.

[0054] A dual port connector of this type allows for the connector to be easily dismantled and cleaned. Furthermore, the connector part, being made from a plastic like material is inexpensive to manufacture and will give hospitals and patients the option to dispose of the connector rather than to clean and disinfect the connector for reuse.

Dual Port Electrical/Pneumatic Connector

[0049] During use of ventilator apparatus in a hospital, where there is a humidifier and at least one breathing conduit, a connector of another preferred form of the present invention might be utilized. Some ventilator apparatus used in hospitals are provided with a dry line (dry breathing conduit) extending from the ventilator or blower that carries dry gas to the humidifier. A further breathing conduit, an inspiratory limb, extends from the humidifier to the patient and carries humidified gases to the patient as that is described above in relation to Figures 8 to 13.

[0050] The female portion 305 may form part of the chamber of the humidifier or may be attached by appropriate means to that of the side port 501 similar to that of the side port 501 of the connector as described above in relation to Figures 8 to 13.

[0053] The male 300 and female 305 portions, an injection moulded. In some cases the female portion 305 may be integrally injection moulded with the humidifier chamber. Each of these portions may be formed by other appropriate methods.

[0054] A dual port connector of this type allows for the connector to be easily dismantled and cleaned. Furthermore, the connector part, being made from a plastic like material is inexpensive to manufacture and will give hospitals and patients the option to dispose of the connector rather than to clean and disinfect the connector for reuse.

the patient. A connector receiving means and a locking connector means are provided for connecting the system to a dual port cartridge.	25	[0056] The male portion 300 of a dual port cartridge connector is shown in Figures 14 and 15. The dual cartridge connector provides two pneumatic connections, one between the dry line and the humidifier, and the other between the inspiratory limb and the humidifier. This connector also provides for an electrical connection from the humidifier to the wires residing in each of the dry line and inspiratory limb. The male portion 300 has four tubular shaped protrusions that each defines a port 301, 302, 303, 304. The first port 301 is connected to 40 the conduit of the dry line, and the second port 302 is connected to the conduit of the inspiratory limb. The third port 303 and fourth port 304 tubular shaped ports are connected via a female portion 305 (as shown in Figures 16 and 17) to the humidifier. The male portion also has located on it a rectangular shaped recess 306 that has contacts within it that melt with the electrical wires functioning within or about the tubes.	45	[0057] To provide a pneumatic connection between each of the tubes and a humidifier, the third port 303 and fourth port 304 ports are inserted into complementary shaped recesses 307, 308 in the female portion 305 and a lach (not shown) is inserted in a recess that causes	55
Claims	40	1. A connector to couple a gases supply means and a male portion of a generally tubular shape connected to one of said gases supply means and a lock said conduit, said male portion having a lock said conduit, said male portion and an electrical connector receiving means and an electrical connector receiving means, a female portion of a generally tubular shape connected to one of said gases supply means and said conduit, said female portion having a locking connector means and an electrical connector receiving means,	45	[0058] A connector receiving means and a locking connector means are provided for connecting the connector receiving means and a locking connector receiving means to a dual port cartridge.	55
[0058] A connector receiving means and a locking connector means are provided for connecting the connector receiving means and a locking connector receiving means to a dual port cartridge.	45	[0059] The male portion 300 of a dual port cartridge connector is shown in Figures 14 and 15. The dual cartridge connector provides two pneumatic connections, one between the dry line and the humidifier, and the other between the inspiratory limb and the humidifier. This connector also provides for an electrical connection from the humidifier to the wires residing in each of the dry line and inspiratory limb. The male portion 300 has four tubular shaped protrusions that each defines a port 301, 302, 303, 304. The first port 301 is connected to 40 the conduit of the dry line, and the second port 302 is connected to the conduit of the inspiratory limb. The third port 303 and fourth port 304 tubular shaped ports are connected via a female portion 305 (as shown in Figures 16 and 17) to the humidifier. The male portion also has located on it a rectangular shaped recess 306 that has contacts within it that melt with the electrical wires functioning within or about the tubes.	45	[0060] To provide a pneumatic connection between each of the tubes and a humidifier, the third port 303 and fourth port 304 ports are inserted into complementary shaped recesses 307, 308 in the female portion 305 and a lach (not shown) is inserted in a recess that causes	55
[0060] To provide a pneumatic connection between each of the tubes and a humidifier, the third port 303 and fourth port 304 ports are inserted into complementary shaped recesses 307, 308 in the female portion 305 and a lach (not shown) is inserted in a recess that causes	45	[0061] A connector to couple a gases supply means and a male portion of a generally tubular shape connected to one of said gases supply means and a lock said conduit, said male portion having a lock said conduit, said male portion and an electrical connector receiving means and an electrical connector receiving means, a female portion of a generally tubular shape connected to one of said gases supply means and said conduit, said female portion having a locking connector means and an electrical connector receiving means,	45	[0062] A connector receiving means and a locking connector means are provided for connecting the connector receiving means and a locking connector receiving means to a dual port cartridge.	55

Cartridge Type Humidifier and Connector

[0048] In other forms of the present invention, such as that shown in Figure 27, the electrical connector part 500 of a male connector is similar to that described above, located on the base 503 of a humidifier 504. The humidifier 504 has a cartridge type chamber 502 that has the pneumatic connector part 501 of the male connector located on it. As shown in Figure 28 where the female portion of the connector 505 (attached to the end of a breathing conduit 506) is connected to the male portions

private locations. On insertion, a simultaneous electrical connection is made as the rectangular shaped electrical protrusion 309 located on the female portion 305 is inserted into the electrical recess 306 of the male portion 300. The electrical protrusion 309 is connected to wiring within the humidifier and subsequently to the control mechanisms within the humidifier, to provide power to the electrical wiring and to control the heating of the coil until or to pick up signals sent through the wiring, similar to the invention described above.

[0049] During use of ventilator apparatus in a hospital, where there is a humidifier and at least one breathing conduit, a connector of another preferred form of the present invention might be utilized. Some ventilator apparatus used in hospitals are provided with a dry line (dry breathing conduit) extending from the ventilator or blower that carries dry gas to the humidifier. A further breathing conduit, an inspiratory limb, extends from the humidifier to the patient and carries humidified gases to the patient as that is described above.

[0050] The female portion 305 may form part of the chamber of the humidifier or may be attached by appropriate means to that of the side port 501 similar to that of the side port 501 of the connector as described above in relation to Figures 8 to 13.

[0053] The male 300 and female 305 portions, an injection moulded. In some cases the female portion 305 may be integrally injection moulded with the humidifier chamber. Each of these portions may be formed by other appropriate methods.

[0054] A dual port connector of this type allows for the connector to be easily dismantled and cleaned. Furthermore, the connector part, being made from a plastic like material is inexpensive to manufacture and will give hospitals and patients the option to dispose of the connector rather than to clean and disinfect the connector for reuse.

Dual Port Electrical/Pneumatic Connector

[0049] During use of ventilator apparatus in a hospital, where there is a humidifier and at least one breathing conduit, a connector of another preferred form of the present invention might be utilized. Some ventilator apparatus used in hospitals are provided with a dry line (dry breathing conduit) extending from the ventilator or blower that carries dry gas to the humidifier. A further breathing conduit, an inspiratory limb, extends from the humidifier to the patient and carries humidified gases to the patient as that is described above in relation to Figures 8 to 13.

[0050] The female portion 305 may form part of the chamber of the humidifier or may be attached by appropriate means to that of the side port 501 similar to that of the side port 501 of the connector as described above in relation to Figures 8 to 13.

[0053] The male 300 and female 305 portions, an injection moulded. In some cases the female portion 305 may be integrally injection moulded with the humidifier chamber. Each of these portions may be formed by other appropriate methods.

[0054] A dual port connector of this type allows for the connector to be easily dismantled and cleaned. Furthermore, the connector part, being made from a plastic like material is inexpensive to manufacture and will give hospitals and patients the option to dispose of the connector rather than to clean and disinfect the connector for reuse.

Claims

[0051] To provide a pneumatic connection between each of the tubes and a humidifier, the third 303 and fourth 304 ports are inserted into complementary shaped recesses 307, 308 in the female portion 305 and a lach (not shown) is inserted in a recess that causes wherein coupling of said male and female connections causes said locking connector means to engage with said locking connector receiving means and lock said male and female portions together.

and said coupling simultaneously causing said electrical connector means to engage with said electrical connector receiving means making a pneumatic seal and electrical connection between said male and female portions and consequently between said gases supply means and said conduit.

2. A connector according to claim 1 wherein said gases supply means is a humidifier.

3. A connector according to claim 1 wherein said gases supply means is an integrated blower and humidifier.

4. A connector according to claim 1 wherein said gases supply means is a positive pressure ventilation device.

5. A connector according to any one of claims 1 to 4 wherein said locking connector means is a recess located on the external surface of said male portion.

6. A connector according to any one of claims 1 to 5 wherein said locking connector means is a thread disposed upon the external surface of said male portion.

7. A connector according to any one of claims 1 to 5 wherein said locking connector means is a bayonet type fitting located on said male portion.

8. A connector according to any one of claims 1 to 7 wherein an electrical socket is located on the external surface of said male portion, said electrical socket having at least one first electrical contact surface and being connected to a power supply.

9. A connector according to any one of claims 1 to 8 wherein said locking connector receiving means is a protrusion shaped to engage with said recess to cause the locking of said male and female portions together.

10. A connector according to any one of claims 1 to 8 wherein said locking connector receiving means is a thread disposed upon the internal surface of said tubular shaped female portion.

11. A connector according to any one of claims 1 to 10 wherein said electrical connector receiving means is a recess having at least one second electrical contact surface shaped to receive said electrical socket and said pins, such that electrical contact is made between said first and second electrical contact surfaces.

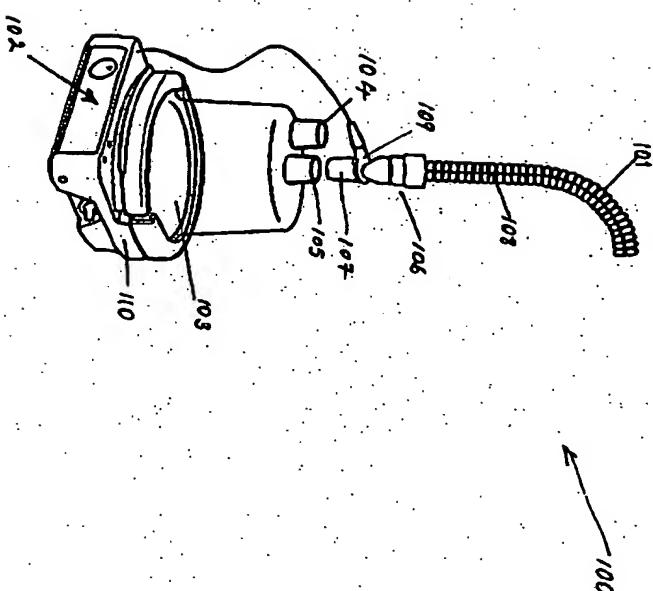


Figure 1

PRIOR ART

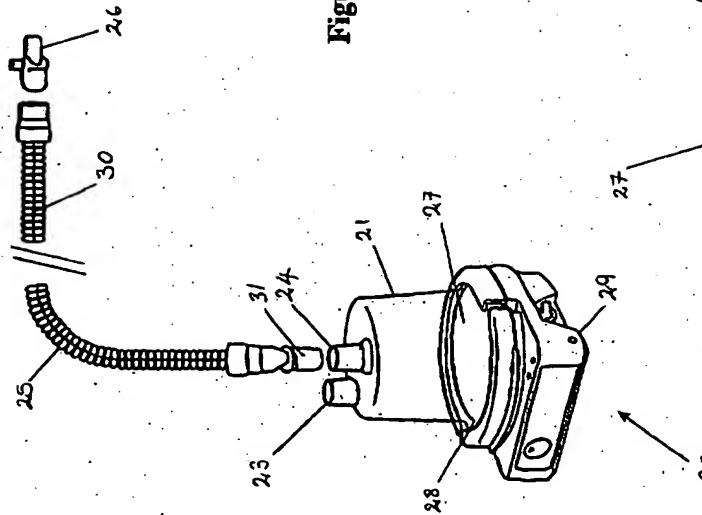


Figure 3

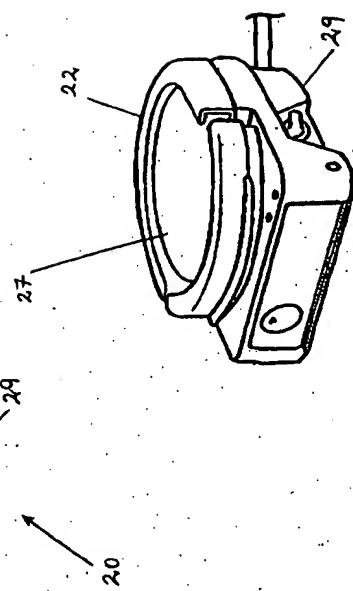


Figure 4

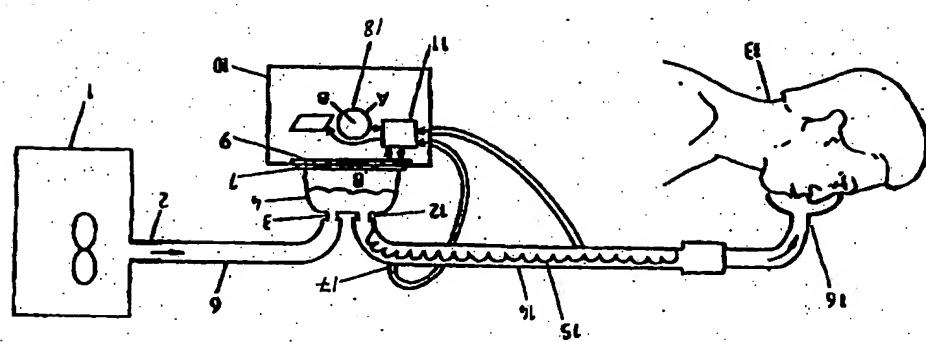


Figure 2

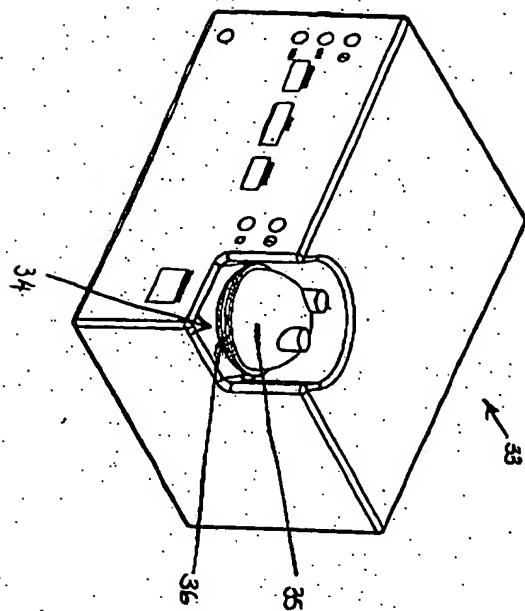


Figure 5

13

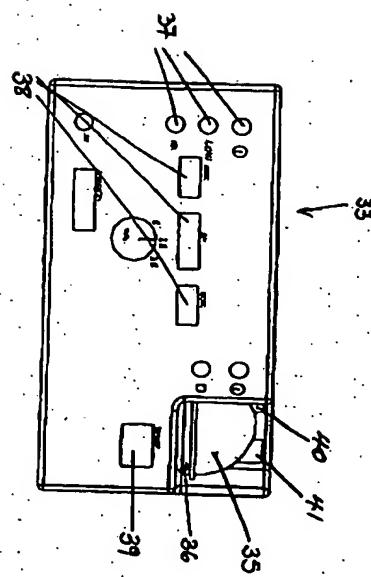


Figure 6

14

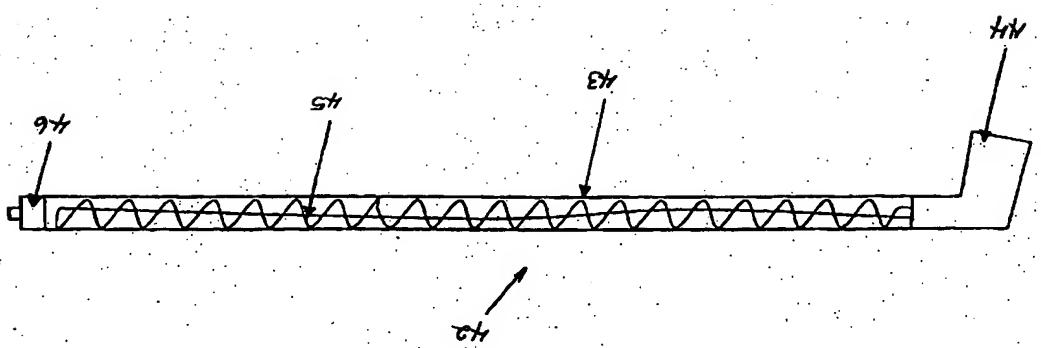


Figure 7

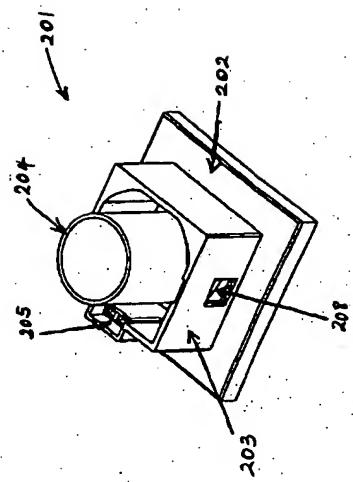


Figure 8

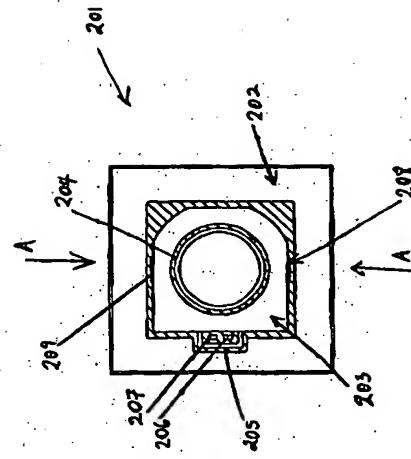


Figure 9

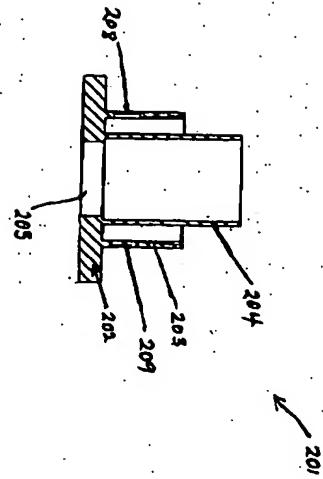


Figure 10

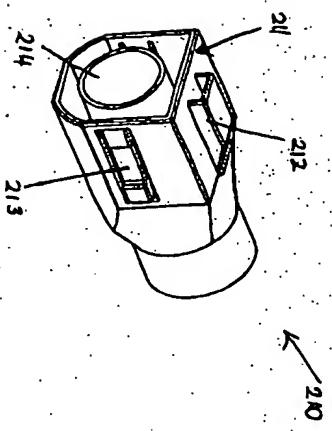


Figure 11

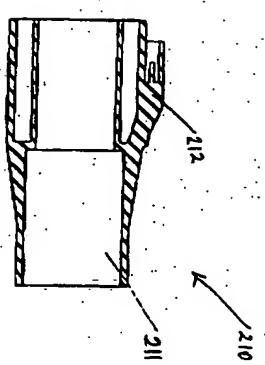


Figure 12

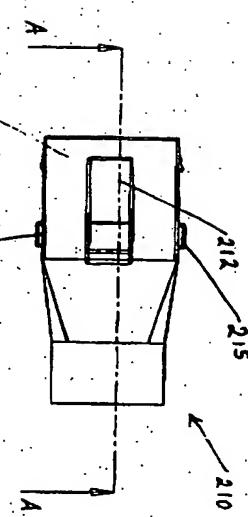


Figure 13

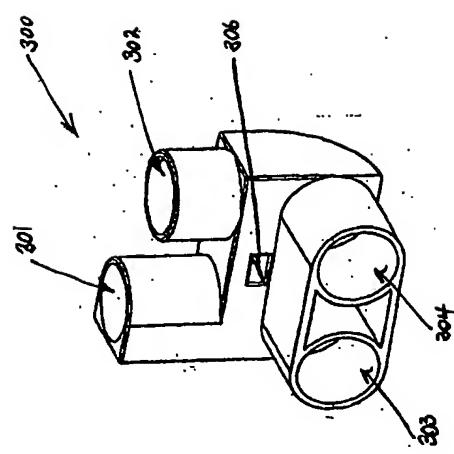


Figure 14

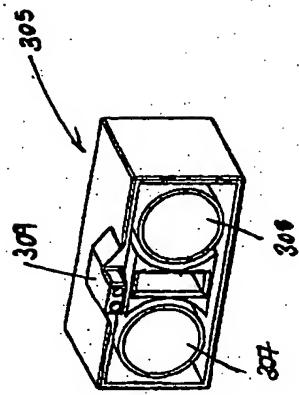


Figure 16

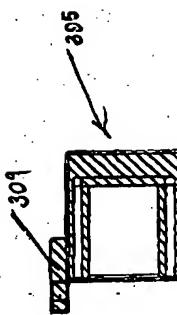


Figure 17

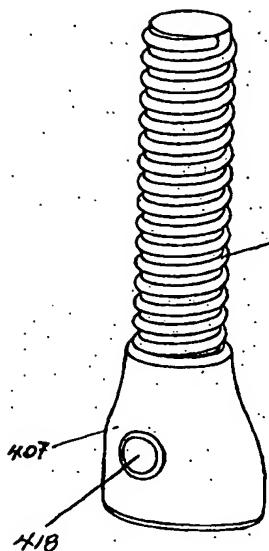


Figure 18

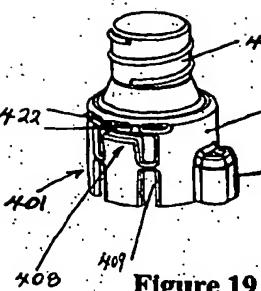


Figure 19

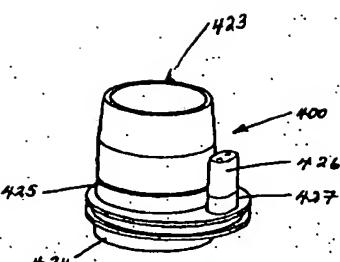


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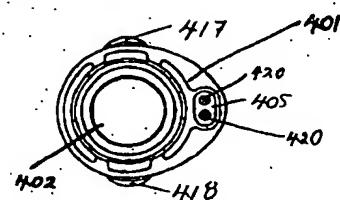


Figure 21

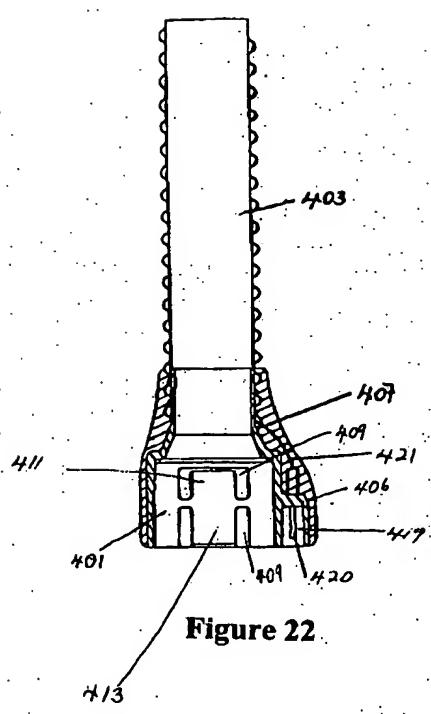


Figure 22

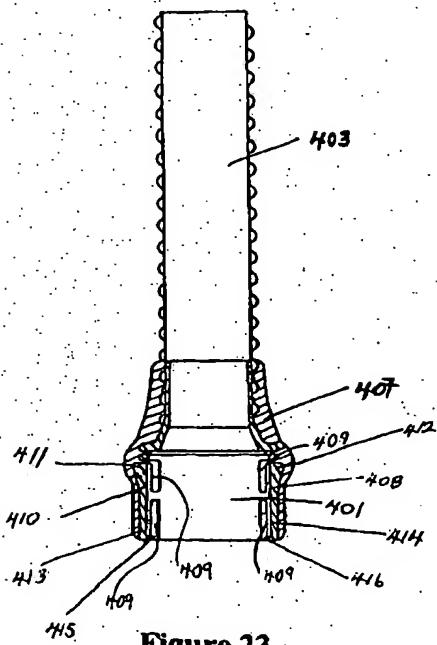


Figure 23

Figure 27

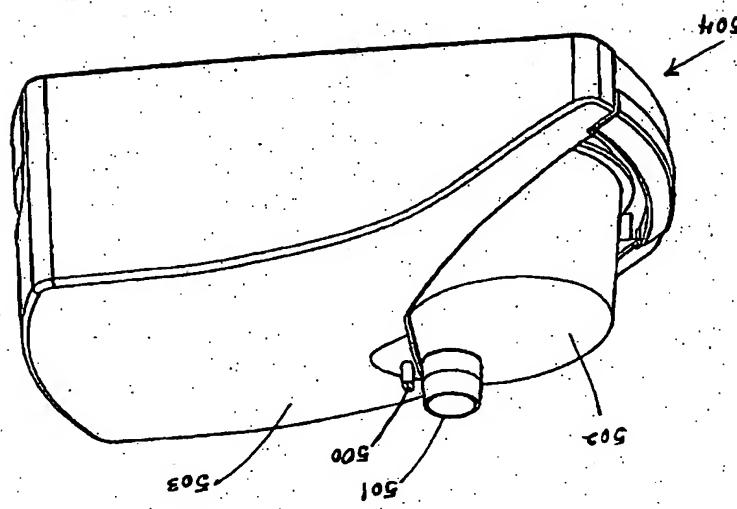


Figure 26

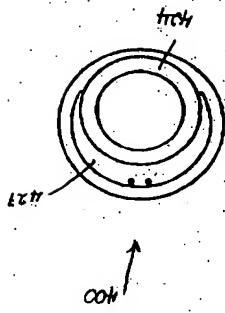


Figure 25

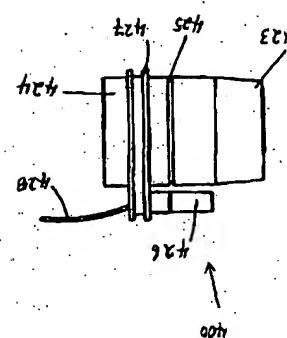
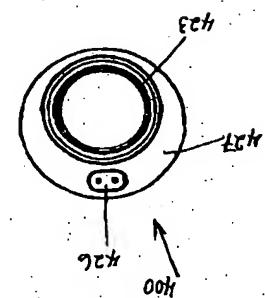


Figure 24



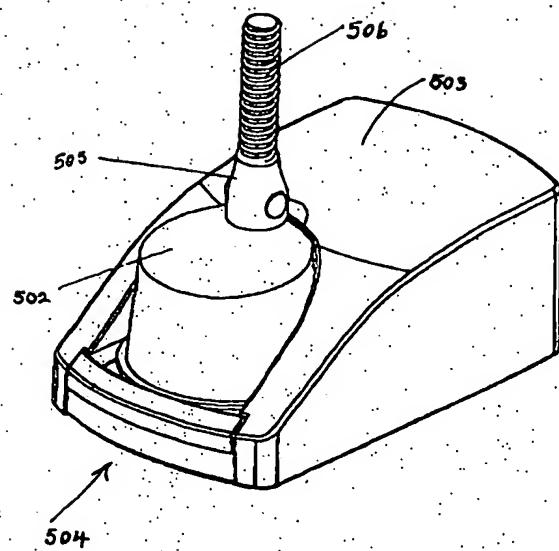


Figure 28

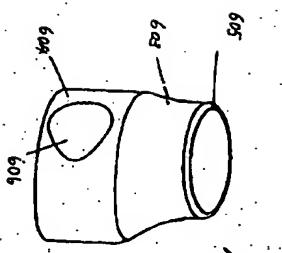


Figure 29

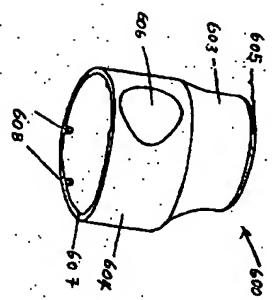


Figure 30

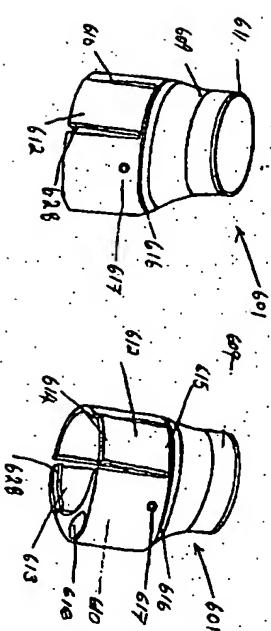


Figure 31

Figure 32



EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 03 01 2599

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Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages		
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Place of search	Category of cited documents		
MUNICH		17 September 2003	Azzizia, M

F: theory or article underlying the invention
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 D: document cited in the application
 L: document cited in the search
 A: document of a same category
 O: non-written disclosure
 P: intermediate document

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Figure 36

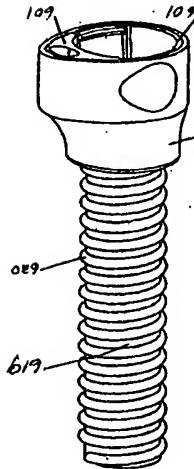


Figure 35

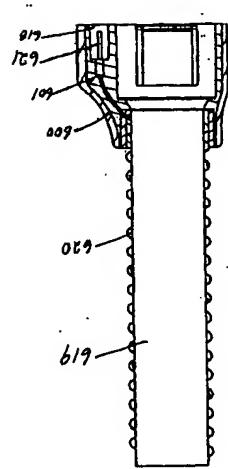


Figure 34

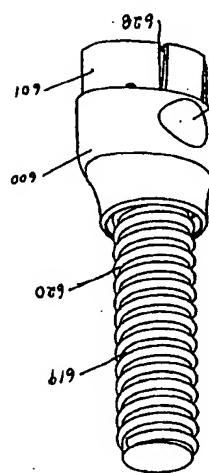
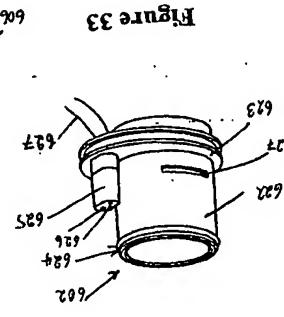


Figure 33




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 P: electronic document

 Date of completion of the search
 17 September 2003
 Examiner
 A.2a/218, M

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For more details about this annex: see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 1/2002

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ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 03 01 2599

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